[NEW SERIES.]
Vol. 3. *Price, 10 Cents. Per Annum, $3.* No. 4.

[Whole No. 317.]

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1874.

Subject: God's Will.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

New York:
J. B. FORD AND COMPANY.
(27 PARK PLACE, AND 24 AND 26 MURRAY STREET.)
1874.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.
European Agents, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London. Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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GOD'S WILL.

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."—MATT. vi., 10.

The divine will is universal law. It is the ground, therefore, of the universal hope and confidence, that the divine will or law seeks for the highest good of the creatures of God—and that, too, according to the circumstances of their creation and the conditions into which they have been put by the divine providence. We have been taught from our childhood that we were sinful, and so we are; that we were corrupt, and surely in some degree all men have corrupted themselves; nevertheless, the general conception which has been formed in respect to the nature and the character of man has, by reason of peculiar technical terms and modes of statement, gone wide of the truth. If it be said that every man needs to be transformed, to be educated, to be carried up from the point at which he starts, and in every part of his nature; if it be said that this is the universal necessity, it is true; but if it be said that all thoughts, that all actions, that everything which belongs to human experience, is in and of itself bad, it is not true. If it be said that men are all of them corrupted by reason of their own original nature,—who made that nature? It is the work of God. I was not born where I was by any choice of mine, and, therefore, not by any fault of mine. I was not born with the proportions which go to the making up of body and mind by any allotment of my own. That which is in me

SUNDAY MORNING, Oct. 4, 1874. LESSON: Matt. v., 1-16. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 199, 531, 725.

was given to me. It is not the fault of the hawk that it is a hawk. It is no virtue in a dove that it is a dove. It is no degradation to a worm that it is a worm. These things but express facts which indicate a foregoing divine purpose. It is as God meant it should be.

Now, that the condition of the human race is one that needs infinite sympathy, infinite patience and forbearance, infinite and continuing influences ; that men need to be born again, not once nor twice, but continuously ; that they need the divine forgiveness, and renovation, and stimulation, and strength to upbear them ; this great fact, universal, both as it respects time and extent, is true : but it does not follow that it is true from the grounds and reasons that have always been alleged. It does not follow that there are not important discriminations by which men may avail themselves of the blessedness of that truth which inheres in our text :

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

If by the will of God you take the highest conception of all perfectness which is possible to rational and accountable beings ; if you pray that God's will may become instantly and at once, not merely the general ideal, and so the point of aspiration, but an inexorable rule of judgment, and that all men may be judged here in their varying conditions just as they are in heaven ; if the poor African, born with his peculiar temperament, and in the circumstances where life found him, may be judged by the same rule as the archangel ; if the Asiatics in their long state of degradation are to have instantly applied to them the highest conception of manhood and they are at once to be judged by it ; if men all through our own civilized land—born, some of thieves, some of robbers, some of intemperate parents, some of stupid parents (whose genius they inherit), some where no culture comes, and some where there is much culture—are to be judged by that conception ; if you bring down the divine ideal of perfect manhood—God's thought of a perfect being—and apply it at once and continuously to all men in their infancy, in their boyhood, in their youth, in their manhood, and in their old age, under all conceivable circumstances, you might as well

with one wide sweeping flash of lightning cut off the whole race; for no man can be measured by such a standard. If the will of God were to become peremptory immediately, if the ulterior and final excellence were instantly applied as the universal daily rule of judgment, it would slaughter the race and whelm them in ruin.

Shall we, therefore, let down this conception? Shall we lower the standard of life? Shall we make virtue to be less than it is, shall we make morals to be less than they are, shall we make manhood to be less than it is, in scope? Shall we take away from men all responsibilities? Shall we remove penalties, which are God's goads and spurs? Shall we take away from the world the motives that already exist to drive men up from animalism and ignorance and degradation to a higher position? Nay, verily, not that. The standard must be kept up. It would destroy the race in one way if the standard were to become peremptory in its daily applications: it would destroy the race in another way if you were to lower the standard to the present conditions of the human family.

What need we, then? We need a divine Being, an administration that shall stand between the final form of human perfection and the state into which men are born in this life, with benign influences, with moral attributes, with patience, with gentleness and nourishingness, by which men shall be led, step by step, onward and upward until they reach this higher and final form of perfection.

So when we pray that the will of God may be done, into that will enters the conception of time, of gradualism, of evolution, and of successive developments. Into the conception of that divine will, also, since it is the creative idea of the world, enters a forbearance, a gentleness and a patience on the part of God, inherent in his nature, and organic as well as inherent in his moral government, which looks upon imperfections and unrighteousness with such allowance as is necessary in order to bring it up to the final form.

It is impossible for any man to frame a full conception of the divine nature. It would indicate that we ourselves were

like God in kind, and also that to a certain degree we were in scope equal to God. But only so much of the divine nature as we have specimens of in ourselves can we understand. If to the five senses there were added another, could any man be made to understand what the sixth sense was, not having it, but merely being informed that there was one, and that in another sphere some beings had it? It is not like the eye, you are told, and it is not like the ear, and it is not like touch, and it is not like taste, and it is not like smell. Well, what is it like? Oh, it is *something else.* But if you have never had any example of it in yourself you never could dream or form the slightest approximation to a thought of what the sixth sense might be. Although you might believe that there were persons who had six or ten senses, you could not have any conception of them. Nor can any man form a conception of a mental quality except as the rudiment or some germ of it is in himself. Only so much of God do we understand as we have in ourselves some specimen or some indication of.

Consider how very imperfect is our understanding of our own selves. Consider how little men know of what they are, of what the nature of their mind is, and of what are the causes which influence them. Consider how still less men understand each other—for although we have a certain amount of practical knowledge derived from familiarity with life, and more or less traditionary knowledge, so that men move with men, and act upon each other, and cohere together, and co-operate; yet, after all, the knowledge of the human mind is very small. And how much less must be our knowledge of that great Over-Mind which governs the universe! How much less can we understand of God (who understands all of us) that understand so little of ourselves and of our fellow-men!

That which is true in respect to the nature and structure if I may so say, of the divine Being, is equally true with regard to the divine government. It is impossible for the mass of men to understand all the elements of human government. Even statesmen understand comparatively little of it, and the more they understand the more obscure

they see the great national questions of life and administration to be. None know how far beyond any present attainment in human life is the science of right government, with all its infinite elements; and if we cannot understand human government, which is a visible thing, and which deals with visible qualities, how much beyond our conception is the divine government, which includes all sorts and variations of existence, and infinities in every direction!

Men speak of the divine will as though it were so clear and plain that it could be put into the catechism, or into books with chapters and verses. Men can almost count the shingles on the roof and the nails which hold the different parts together, with a perfect familiarity! And yet, after all, we are but children. We understand a little here and there of the divine government because we transfer our small knowledge of ordinary government to the divine; acting upon it by our imagination we transform it and give it magnitude in our conception; but, after all, the knowledge is very little.

There are, however, some things in the divine nature which we understand, because they are brought to us by a process which is familiar to our childhood and our thought. I refer to the adaptation which love finds in itself to all the conditions of an existence that begins at zero, and gradually unfolds through every stage of imperfection and fault and mistake to final manhood. That is the most familiar knowledge that we have. Every child born into a household, born under the government of a father and mother, born a babe, with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, and hands that handle not, and feet that walk not, born with its prime function in the mouth—every such child beginning almost at nothing expands a little; but what is the babe of four months, or of six months, or of twelve months, or of two years, or of three years, but a beloved little bundle of ignorances? And how continuously is the hand of the nurse stretched out to guard it against water, against fire, against stairs, against sharp cutting instruments, against all manner of food that it seeks to its own damage! Something must take care of this unknowing child. Something is to bear

patiently with it, and teach it, and wait while it is being taught, until it learns enough to imperfectly take care of itself; and then, when it has begun to take care of itself a little, wait until it goes on through mistakes that lie on every side of it like pitfalls to catch its inexperience, until it passes through boyhood up to manhood, and is launched upon life, and is twenty-one years of age. He knows everything now, and has no need of any further watching! but all the way up to the perfect man of twenty-one he needs the schoolmaster, he needs magistrates, he needs monitors, he needs punitive as well as directive influences. In the prime idea of the parental relation under the administration of father and mother the child is nothing, and they are required to rear it from zero to maximum, a process which is forwarded in the spirit of love. In the household there is no liberty to do what you please simply because the father and mother love, and because they are seeking the good of the child. The true father and mother know what are the virtues of pain, of self restraint, of disappointment, of self-denial. They know that tears are cleansing. Every child that has been well brought up, unless it is a child of extraordinarily happy endowment, has known the ministration of denial and penalty and tears and trial and suffering as a part of its education; and the more faithful the father and mother are, the more they reign, and the child is made to submit for its own good; and the more we, as children, are made to submit by our parents for our good, the more in later life do we revere and love them.

"They [fathers of our flesh] verily for a few days chastened us for their pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

God identifies himself in moral government with the parental relation of the household.

So then, though we may not understand God in his whole character and divine nature, though we may have but a very remote idea of the moral government of God, when we pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we may have a clear understanding of this fact: that whatever God is in the stature and breadth of infinite intellec-

tion, whatever he is in the nature of affection overflowing for universal want, whatever he is in the wisdom of the adaptation of means to ends in the universal government, and however far short we may come of any perfect knowledge in these respects, we know that all things work together for good, and were designed to work together for good to them that love God—good to universal man, the condition being that we open our eyes to it, and behold it, and love God, and take it.

At this point we come to a much closer apprehension of the divine nature, and to a stage where we are better able to say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Since God's will is not a cogent will, acting suddenly with cutting pains or penalties; since it is the will of God to bear with men, to be patient with them, to be gentle toward them, to be forbearing with them—and yet never to give them rest because they are to grow to the stature of kings and priests, and be with him forever; we see that it is his will to meet them in the exigencies of their being as parents on earth meet their children at birth, and bring them up through all the necessities of their childhood life.

The government of God, then, seeks our final perfection, and never lets that down; but it assumes that men are imperfect, and that perfection is the result of growth, and not of instantaneity in any form. It adapts itself to the constitution and circumstances of men. So the divine nature is not one that sits in its own perfection, demanding instant perfection. The divine nature broods the world. As the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, so Christ said he would have gathered his favorite people under his wings; and we may say, without irreverence, that God gathers the world under his wings, and waits, warming them by his own body, feeding them by his own search, and attending and defending them by his infinite power and patience and long suffering. God is one that sits in the center of universal being to adapt himself to the infinite wants of imperfect creatures, made imperfect. He adapts himself and his moral government to the conditions of a world which he himself fixed, and which in every direction he reproduces.

Now, although we can imagine that a fallen race might be blameworthy, there is no principle and no moral government that can be addressed to the intelligence of mankind which can justify a being who perceives a race to be utterly degraded and destroyed, and reproduces them through years, through ages, not only, but through myriads and myriads of ages, that they may suffer, and is careless of their suffering. This is heathenism enshrined! This is demonism enthroned! This is an infinite insult to the reason, the honor and the conscience! That a race made perfect, and falling by their own fault, may be damnable, any man may say; but that there should be a system of government by which that race should swarm again, and then again, and not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but myriads of times, on the globe, pouring out populations more numerous than the drops of dew at night, or of the rain-storms in the tropics by day, every creature being a soul that is a kingdom, and every one infinite, like God, in duration—that such a race should be propagated and continued where the prime condition of birth is imperfection and liability through ten thousand reasons to sinfulness, with God sitting unmoved, cold as marble, perfectly finished himself; and that then he should lay the law of infinite perfection on that race which he has permitted to come into being in these inchoate and unformed and unlovely conditions—this is a tyranny compared to which Neroism and demonism were humanity! There can be no realization of God that can draw the universal heart to him until you have a God that is adapted to the conditions to which he himself brings men.

If, then, men are brought into life with the certainty of sinfulness, there must be an administration that adapts itself mercifully to the condition of sinfulness. If men are, by the very nature of their being, unable to perfect themselves, or round themselves out, except by a score or two scores of years, and then but imperfectly, there must be an administration that shall have in it an adaptation to the imperfect condition of the human race; and it is this that is in God.

As the mother knows how to love her child steadily

through growing years, his faults aside, his imperfections notwithstanding, to teach him, to build him up, and still by love to minister to him, whether it be pain or joy, whatever it be that is necessary to his perfect development; so God sits, in the infinite resources of his disposition, central in the universe, to give to them all the things which they lack, and to bear with them until these gifts, appropriated, build them up—until they are unfolded and educated by his long-suffering and gentleness and kindness, for the sake of exercising which men are permitted to come into this world as they are, imperfect, their imperfections being permitted to break out into mistakes, these mistakes being permitted to go on to faults, these faults being permitted to go forward to sins, and these sins being permitted to go on to crimes. All these necessities or possibilities inhere in a free moral government; but there must be taught a Governor over all that adapts himself to these positive universal conditions so that men may gradually go higher, or else the system of religion is a system of abhorrent tyranny.

It is on account of the gentleness and patience which are in God, which are the food of imperfection, and which are the exact equivalents of adaptation to the want of the human race, that we say, "Thy will be done"—not the will of God as representing final perfection, instantly employed for the destruction of the universe, but that will of God which, with the distinct knowledge that men are brought into the world raw, unripe, untamed, untaught, undisciplined, ungrown, and while bringing them in through countless conditions, yet holds itself adequate by long-suffering patience, by kindness and by *loving* kindness, by mercies and by *tender* mercies, by joy and by sorrow, by universal and infinite instrumentalities, to develop men from their low and animal states into high, angelic conditions.

When we conceive of all time as the theater of this vast evolution, not of organic matter crystalline, nor of the lower forms of existence in the vegetable kingdom, nor of the lower modes of animal existence, but of the human race after intelligence has been developed in it; and when we conceive of a God who makes it the business of his life to be the universal

Schoolmaster, the universal Nurse, the universal Burden-bearer and Cross-bearer, the universal Sufferer, in the sense of care and personal adaptation, the One supremest in activity and humblest in the sense of bowing himself down everlastingly to the want of the weak and the poor—when such conceptions fill the heaven, what heart can forbear to say, "Thy will [which carries gentleness, and sweetness, and forgiveness, and patience; which also carries pain and penalty and disciplinary education of every sort; which creates us at nothing, and fills us and develops us by experience until we are prepared for a higher stage of existence] be done on earth as it is in heaven"—done to-day, so far as it adapts itself to to-day; done in cycles; done according to the philosophy which God has of the way in which the universe is to rise out of inchoate matter up through various steps to find finish and spiritual existence in the life that is to come?

If this, then, be a legitimate general review of the nature of God and his relation to government and to the vast human family, there are many points in it which will bring comfort, consolation, instruction, and warning.

I remark, in the first place, that any system of dealing with men which proceeds on any other ground than that of the universal weakness and sinfulness of man is philosophically inconsistent with a true charity. There is no operation so unjust as that which takes a high standard and applies it peremptorily to low development. If one were to go into an infant school with the same rigor of instruction with which Oxford or Cambridge treats its scholars; if one were to demand of childhood that which is rightly demanded of manhood, such holding of a lower state of development to the responsibilities of a higher state would be the most crushing oppression.

We hold that men are naturally sinful; yet when we judge them in society we continually hold up standards that are not applicable to them all. We do not say of one and another, "He committed a fault." We do not stop to reason as to what is their disposition, what is their intelligence, or what are the conditions and circumstances under which motives

press upon them in the direction of wrong-doing. We simply hold them to an abstract rule of duty. If they fail in that we chastise them with our thought, with our tongue, peradventure, also, with our hand. How many are there who perpetually take into practical consideration the doctrine which they so strenuously insist on in theology, that men by nature, by birth, and by necessity are imperfect and prone to fail?

If a man tread on you, you regard him as guilty of heedlessness, until you turn and see that he is blind; and then he that trod on you because he was blind has your compassion rather than your anger. So we should adapt ourselves and our judgments to what we know mankind to be.

In regard to the mass of men it is a great deal better to consider their imperfections; and using the old nomenclature with a kind of latitude, I should say, If you do not believe the doctrine of human sinfulness, you are not on a foundation on which you can be charitable. It used to be the case that to charge all mankind with being sinful and corrupt was not only a violation of truth, but an insult to humanity. I aver, however, that that truth which was originally meant and sought after and felt for when men were declared to be depraved is indispensable to any right, charitable conduct toward them. If men are regarded as honorable, truthful, noble by nature, armed against evil and full of all impulses toward right, you have a right to require of them the highest conduct; but if men are not by nature truthful, if they are subject to various impulsion, if they are germinant creatures seeking honor, gaining occasional glimpses and attaining imperfect developments of it, but pursuing it under endless complications and with continuous mistakes, then you have no right to require of them perfect conduct. The eye does not see what it looks at; the ear does not hear what it listens to; the senses are liable to fall into error; and every scientific man knows that behind the first impression is something more accurate than that impression. The truth is not always what it appears to be. We are imperfect perpetually. Yet things in this lower state are what they were in the creative design—what they were meant to be,—and it is this

lower state which is to be the foundation of charity, which is to unite man to man, and which is to lead men to pity each other and bear one another's burdens.

It ought not to be considered so much a matter of degradation that men are sinful. Things that hitherto, according to the old theological notions, were called sinful are not to be looked upon as matters of degradation. We must bring moral judgment on to the same ground with material judgment. We never say that a child is born sinful because it cannot walk; we never say: "See that little guilty heathen, that cannot walk although it has flesh, and bones, and articulations all right." We accept the fact that the child was made not to walk; that it was created without the capacity to walk until it has first learned to use its feet; and we do not attach any blame-worthiness or dishonor to such incapacity of the body. Nor do we attach blame to incapacity of the lower forms of the understanding. If a child only eight years old has an arithmetic put into his hands, and is told to study and learn the first six pages, when he comes to the recitation and does not know a letter or a figure, do you spank him? You should be spanked, then! He cannot learn the lesson assigned him. The capacity for it is not in him. He must come to it. The unfolding is just as natural as that of the bud in spring. Can you go forth in March and say to all nature, "Behold, the sun shines! Out with your buds and blossoms"? There is an order in the growth of men; it is imperative; and you can not say to children in respect to the body or the lower forms of mind, "It is your duty to do so and so." You cannot say to them, "You are clothed with full responsibility because you have ample capacity." They have not ample capacity. It comes by usage; it comes by development, at first a little, and by and by something more; and the divine government adapts itself to exactly those facts. It is natural, it is in accordance with nature, it is a part of God's design, that mankind should gradually unfold from the lower to the higher states of their being.

When, therefore, it is said, "We are all sinful," that is, sinful to the extent that we need regeneration, men say,

"That is throwing a pall over creation; it is the proclamation of a degrading state of facts." No, not in the sense of voluntary transgression. If, for instance, I know what kindness is, and deliberately refuse it, if I know what wrong is, and deliberately perpetrate it, that is *sin* in the active form, and to that attaches the highest degree of ignominy in the divine mind; but those mistakes which come from undeveloped conditions and from limited capacities, those errors which certainly do materially interfere with moral perfection, and with full allegiance to God's idea of rectitude, are of the nature of infirmities; and it is declared that our great High-priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; or in the older Scripture it is declared, "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." It is our nothingness, our emptiness, our want of experience, and skill, and knowledge, that God looks upon and pities. It is true that we are imperfect, but because we are so is no reason why you should hesitate to look at your estate with open eye; and you need not be repelled by that great gulf which theologians have opened, and called in olden times "total depravity," nor shrink back from it. We have noble faculties; we have reason; we look beneath and above; we stretch our thoughts, soaring as no eagle's wing is able to soar; with our understanding and imagination we fly and compass the globe; we search the secret thoughts of the Most High as they have been incarnated; we look at things to be with a power that almost parallels that of the divine nature; and to tell us that we are degraded, and sinful, and totally depraved—I am not myself fond of using such phrases. But that which I believe the better thinkers of the world have been feeling after, the everlasting, essential imperfection, and inchoate condition of the race, this we may admit without fear or sense of degradation, though not without a sense of the necessity of being better; not without a sense of the need of spiritual inspiration; not without the admission that God needs to infuse something of himself into us before we can come up to ourselves. We believe that; we teach it; but there is a

great distinction that ought to be made between the degradation of voluntary sin, and of the mistakes and ignorances which come from the conditions of infirmity and limitation in which men are placed in this world.

Thus, then, as the sense of imperfection is necessary to charity in the judgment of men, so the sense of infirmity is the road by which men may be led to a sense and realization of their sinfulness. If you confound all sins, men still know of things that are not their fault; but if you discriminate those shortcomings and ignorances which flow from the necessity of condition and being, men will be more disposed to acknowledge the faults which are their own, and the sins which are blameworthy and penal.

Divine rigor in maintaining law is entirely consistent, then, with divine leniency towards men under law. Because we teach the universal beneficence of God we do not necessarily abolish the fact of the justice of God, nor the pains nor the penalties which justice bears in its hand. We separate divine attributes and qualities because we are too weak to understand them altogether in their unity, and are obliged therefore to speak of God's truth, and purity, and justice, and love, and integrity, as if they were so many separate things in the divine nature; whereas God is a unit, and all these qualities in him constitute a unitary being; but as we find that we can be lenient with wrong-doing in our children, as we know that a loving administration carries in it pain and penalty, so we may believe that the divine administration, while it holds men up by ten thousand influences to the ideal law, is yet kind and lenient and gentle in dealing with them under that law.

The divine sympathy, therefore, comes to every creature that is conscious of imperfection and of sinfulness in him. What is it that brings the lamb to the bleating mother but hunger? What is it that brings the colt to its dam but hunger? What is it that brings home the chicken flying to the mother when the hawk screams but a sense of danger and weakness? What is it that brings the tear-overflowing child back into the house from its sports but pain from having hurt itself? What is it that brings the patient to his

physician but the sense of the disorder of the system? What is it that brings the weak to the strong but the consciousness of the help that is in the strong? And what is it that brings the soul to God but the consciousness of its need and the feeling that there is in God the strength, the sympathy, the power, the love that it needs?

On this very ground of man's universal necessity, from his nature and from the conditions of his being, I hold up that great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who represents to the world under human conditions the nature and the attributes of God; who discloses the divine government to man; who shall stand in judgment by and by; who stands in judgment every day; who judges your right, but gives you more credit than you give yourself for the little you do right; who judges your wrong, and is even more lenient with your wrong than you are; who judges your sin, and, although in the light of his ideal he sees it to be a thousand times darker and more mischievous than you are wont to, yet has for you compassion and sparing mercy.

I hold up the character of the reigning God as one that is precisely adapted to your want—to your physical want; to your social want; to your economical want; to your soul want; to the highest necessities of the understanding; to the deepest needs of the heart; and to all that goes to make man higher than the beast of the field. Such is your God, infinite in government; more perfect than men can teach or comprehend; and he has destined you and me to rise to a higher state than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive; and he yet stands at the beginnings of things, where we all must stand, and with pity and patience, with pain and pleasure, with joy and sorrow, with anger and a conciliated heart, he is ready to do just that which we need to have done for us—what a mother does for the child, what a father does for the son, what friend does for friend.

Ah! the loves of this world are but sparks that have fallen from that great Sun which stands to warm and inspire and save the universe. No narrow God, governing a province in which he elects myriads to be damned, do I preach to you. No God do I set forth in your presence who is less than

your mother or your father is. I preach that God who carries in himself all inspirations to virtue; all incitements to purity; all that has in it the sense of nobility. I preach to you a God in whom is infinite exaltation and excellence, harmonious and universal, streaming forth, inspiring law, inspiring government, inspiring the household, and inspiring the individual. I preach to you a God of supreme law, which law is final and perfect. I preach to you a God that is stimulating the universe for its development and growth; and yet I preach a God coming down on the other side in humiliation and self-sacrifice epitomized, and by the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ suffering for the sins of the world as the mother suffers for the sins and faults of the cradle. I preach a God who, by his sublime, stimulating, helpful influence, is endeavoring to bring men up to their true manhood, and waits patiently through the long interval between the germ and the blossom; who is the Beginning and the End; who is All and in all; who is the First and the Last; who is the Author, and, blessed be his name, the Finisher; who moulds the first elements of human life, and who shall give the last touches to perfected life, when we are translated from these earthly shores, and stand in Zion and before God.

O ye that walk in darkness! there is a light for you. O ye that walk in weakness! there is strength for you. O ye that starve of hunger! there is food—just that which you need. Ye sick, there is remedy. Ye friendless, there is outpouring and tropical love for you. Ye that find in the conditions of this world so little that makes life desirable, and that look even into the mouth of the sepulcher and say, "Be thou my refuge," there is light, and joy, a home, a Father, and a Helper for you, that is adequate to supply all your need of body, of soul, of social life, of public life, and of business life. God is sufficient for man, and adapts himself to man. It is not you that placate him: it is he that persuades you. It is not you that make a bargain by your promises with God; it is God that does exceeding abundantly more than you ask or think, for every one of you. And it is him that I preach.

If, then, you go lonely it is your fault; and even that fault is condoned. If you go needy and weak, there is no need of it. There is not a soul in this house that has not a right to say, this morning, "My Father." You have no friend in this world like the One that you can summon.

And so, my friends, out of darkness, out of sickness, out of sorrow and out of trouble, look up. This is human; but just above your head the divine begins. In that is luminousness, in that is joy, and in that is infinite peace. Dwell in God, and let his Spirit dwell in you, and you will not sit down in despair, but you will be inspired with all holy aspirations to bear up under the consciousness of imperfection. The indwelling of God, while it brings peace, does not bring contentment in the sense of being content with ignoble conditions. Generous divine love lets the objects of love stand where it found them, grafts them with higher excellences, inspires them through love, and lifts them up. Divine love is like summer in the world, which brings out from the very clod bud and blossom, and out of wood itself the luscious fruit.

This God is your God; this life is full of God; and it is for you, in all your infinite exigences and necessities, to say, "Our Father, let thy will be done in me as in heaven and in heavenly hearts"; and God hears, and will, little by little, fulfill, until by and by he will draw aside the vail from his face—and that is death; for when we look upon God the world fades, and we have escaped; and as birds escape from their eggs, and from their nests, and from the near twigs on which they learn to fly, and at last emerge from the thicket and the forest, and fly under all the heaven, so from the egg and from the nest and from the darkling forest, by and by we shall emerge; and they that listen shall hear us, as heavenward we fly to dwell forever in the Tree of Life.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our Father, that the only strength is not our strength; that we are not left helpless in our own weakness; that we may rise up, if not in obedience to all the laws that control the body, yet in spirit, in soul, into thy presence where are all the secrets and sources of power. Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. By thy power thou dost dwell in us, and dost give us something of thyself. Thou dost enlarge our understanding by purifying it. Thou dost give us strength through our affections; and by drawing them toward thee, and cleansing them and inspiring them with the purity of thine own nature, thou dost give us a wider and stronger life to resist evil and take hold upon good. Thus thou art renewing us from day to day so that our life is not of ourselves. It is not the bread that we eat for the body alone, but that bread which cometh down from heaven that feeds us; for we are not what we are outwardly, but what we are inwardly and before God. There is the sonship hidden. There are all the aspirations and hopes that shall yet lift us into thy very presence, and make us sons of God in the full disclosure of the other life.

And now we pray, to-day, that we may have all that sensitiveness, all that affection, all that uprising of our innermost nature, by which thou art discerned; by which thy power is received; by which we are blessed in over-measure—for thou beholdest in this great multitude what are the diversities of want as no human eye can, and thy heart has compassion as no man's heart knows how to be compassionate. Thou dost perceive the troubles of weakness, and the troubles that come from ignorance, and the troubles that come from other men. Thou knowest all prejudices, and all biases, and all influences malign, and all over-actions and all under-actions. Thou knowest all combinations of circumstances, and how they beat upon men who are weak and oppressed outwardly, who are strong inwardly for evil, who have fallen into mistakes, who are seeking to unravel the tangle into which they have come, who are stumbling by reason of pride, and who are continually brought under trial through their selfishness. Thou knowest the sufferings of parents for their children; thou knowest what companions suffer one for another; thou knowest the sufferings of heart which men experience; thou understandest all the obliquities of disposition, and all the evils which spring from the imagination; thou dost understand all misreasonings, and all truths discerned but partially, and mistakenly practiced; thou readest the hearts of men—their thoughts and intents. Naked and open are we before Him with whom we have to do; and if thou wert stern, if thine eye made inquisition for judgment, who could stand? If thou shouldst let fall thy hand rudely among us, how many hearts would utterly perish in their insensibility and suffering! But thou art an High priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Thou knowest us, having thyself been upon earth, tempted in every faculty, in all points, as we are, yet without sin, but enough tempted to know the pressure and the power of temptation, and to know how easily men yield. Where

thou, sustained by God, wert able to stand, we are cast down and overthrown. Yea, thine own lips did pray that the cup might be taken from thee; thou didst by angelic ministration endure and drink to the very bottom the dregs of sorrow; and now thou art on high not indifferent, but in an everlasting memory of love clothed with sympathy, and filled with power that thou mayest help those who need thee and perish without thee. May all who are bestead drawn near to thee to-day. May every heart bring its burdens and its sorrows to thee. May those who desire to confess to thee open consciously before thee their own innermost life though thou dost not need to have it opened before thee, since thou beholdest in light and in darkness alike. Draw near, we beseech of thee, to all who are in want, and teach them how consciously to recognize thee, and to feel their interest in thee, and to realize what power they have with God by reason of their imperfection and of their great sinfulness; for as we have power one with another, not alone by the things which are excellent, but by the things which we need; and as all our necessities cry out to love, and are voices of power; as our sicknesses call to those that heal, and they are drawn to us by those sicknesses; so much more is our weakness strong before thee to plead and to touch thy compassion, thou unslumbering Lover; much more are our necessities so many hands of supplication lifted up to thee; and we pray for every one—for the aged; for those who are in the midst of the battle of life; for those who are just entering upon the contest; and for the little ones. Look upon them; suit thy mercies to their condition. O thou gracious God, infinite, full of blessing; thou who art inexhaustible in the variety of thy resources, how thou canst adapt thyself to the varying wants of every one! And grant that each may hear himself called by name, and may he know that God thinks of him, and is giving strength to those who are under burdens, and hope to those that are desponding, and forgiveness to those who are out of the way. So may all find something in thee—yea, *all* in thee. Be thou the Bread of life; be thou the Light by which men shall see; be thou the Staff by which they shall walk; be thou the Door through which they shall enter into the tower of refuge; be thou the great Rock in a weary land under whose shadow refreshment shall be found.

We pray that thou wilt not follow alone the sins of men as thou seest them, but that thou wilt let thy servants think, and be compassionate to their thought of their own want.

Accompany the thoughts of those who to-day go wistfully out to those that are separated from them; the thoughts of parents for their children; the thoughts of children for their parents; the thoughts of companions and friends for each other. Under circumstances of peril be thou with men. Shield those whom our hearts desire to have shielded. Be with all who are upon the great deep to-day. Bring such of them home to us as are coming down hither again to lead in our midst the songs of Zion.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt bless all those that we have labored with, wherever they may be, in the wilderness or elsewhere laying foundations on which men shall build noble structures. Bless our whole land. Be pleased to bless the President of these United

States, and all that are associated with him in authority. Bless, we pray thee, all governors. Bless judges in all courts. Bless magistrates everywhere. Bless the whole great body of citizens. May they learn obedience to the law. May they stand in morality, and in industry, and in piety. We pray that this nation may be great, not alone in its harvests, and in its lands, and in its ships, and in its wealth of any kind: may it be great in intelligence, and in love to God and man. Grant that it may become the shield of the weak and despoiled nations of the earth, building them up. And we pray that the time may come when nations shall learn war no more; when all malign influences shall be restrained; when intelligence, and purity, and wisdom, and love shall lift men above the power of the oppressor; and when weakness shall go and strength shall come, bringing liberty and justice with it. Let thy kingdom come, and may thy will be done upon earth as it is in heaven.

We ask it in the name of Jesus, the Redeemer. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT unto us, our heavenly Father, a longing for thee. Grant unto us such a sense of the manner of thy government, of the order of life, that we may feel that in all our circumstances and surroundings we are of the household of God, under his care, under his appointment and equipment, inspired, and guided, and led; and grant that those who have not known thee, those who lie down to die outside of their Father's house, may be aroused and brought in. We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant to men, to cast-aways, to the unhappy, to the friendless, to the struggling, to those to whom life brings little pleasure and much toil, the joy of seeing thee and finding in thee and in thy smiles and love that which the world does not give them. How poor are we, what paupers are we, whom nature only blesses! and how rich are even the poorest and most miserable whom God blesses! Grant, then, thus *thyself*—the insphering of thy life in ours. Grant, we pray thee, the plenitude and power of joy in our souls as they have it with whom thou art. Enter in to sup with us, and dwell with us. Be our constant guest and our benefactor. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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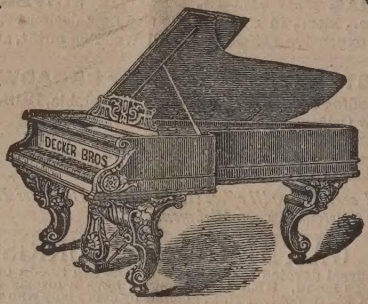

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